



US Army Corps
of Engineers

Urban Rivers Restoration Pilot Fact Sheet Elizabeth River Basin, Virginia

BACKGROUND - Over the last century, industrial development along the Elizabeth River led to such significant contamination that the Elizabeth has been identified as one of the most polluted waterways in the country. The contamination resulted from both civilian and military industries that discharged pollutants directly into the river, from commercial and military spills and from non-point source storm water discharges. The contamination poses health threats to both humans and wildlife. The Elizabeth River Basin area has a population of approximately 594,760 people.

CURRENT ACTIVITIES - Elizabeth River Basin, Cities of Chesapeake, Norfolk, Portsmouth and Virginia Beach, Virginia.

Currently, the US Army Corps of Engineers, the US EPA, and the Commonwealth of Virginia are involved in individual projects & initiatives in the Elizabeth River Basin. The Corps, with local cost-sharing sponsors, for example, is undertaking the removal of contaminated sediments as well as participating in wetland restoration activities. The US EPA has provided water monitoring grants to a local grass roots environmental organization. Several parties are working to address contamination. The goal of the Army Corps of Engineers, for example, is to remove sediments contaminated with metals such as arsenic, copper, lead, mercury, zinc, chromium and nickel and organics such as PAH's and PCB's. Additionally, the Corps has authorization from Congress to conduct wetland restorations. These activities and those of other agencies dealing with restoration of contaminated uplands, pollution prevention and reduction of toxics and nutrients in storm water runoff, may be better coordinated under the auspices of the urban rivers restoration pilot. The team would include the US EPA, the Corps of Engineers, the Commonwealth of Virginia, the Dept. of Transportation's Maritime Administration (South Atlantic Region), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), and community groups such as the Elizabeth River Project

AUTHORITY AND FUNDING -

The Corps' Elizabeth River Basin activities were authorized in the Water Resources Development Acts of 1990, 1996, and 1999. Between FY98 and FY01, \$2.4 million was provided by Congress and local sponsors for a comprehensive feasibility study. Both the sediment and wetlands portions of the Corps project are in the preconstruction engineering and design phase. The FY03 Energy and Water Development Appropriation provides \$471k to continue this effort.

Meanwhile, in FY02 the Elizabeth River Project received a Chesapeake Bay Program grant (\$100k) from the US EPA for the restoration of a tributary of the Elizabeth River and a grant (\$100k) from the Virginia DEQ for water quality and toxics monitoring.

Points of Contact:

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Mar 26, 2003